The Palestinian Museum

The Palestinian Museum is a flagship project of the Welfare Association, a non-profit organization for developing humanitarian projects in Palestine. Representing the history and aspirations of the Palestinian people, the museum aims to discuss the past, present, and future of Palestine.[1]

The Museum in Birzeit (25 km north of Jerusalem) opened on 18 May 2016, despite not having any exhibits.[2] The inaugural exhibition "Jerusalem Lives" was opened on August 26, 2017. [3]

On 29 August 2019, the museum was named a winner of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.[4]

The Palestinian Museum Logo

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Museum without borders

Representing the history and aspirations of the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Museum aims to discuss the past, present, and future of Palestine.[5] The museum's research programs develop knowledge that is relevant inside and outside Palestine.[6] Through its digital platforms and international partners, the museum aims to connect with about 10 million Palestinians[5] scattered around the world, and with all those interested in Palestine.[7]

The museum aims to transcend political and geographical borders, and address the mobility issues due to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Through local, regional and international partnerships and affiliate centers, the Museum seeks to connect Palestinians worldwide.[8] With an extensive network of partnerships within the region, it hopes to act as a hub for cultural activity there.[9]

The idea of developing a museum was initiated in 1997 by the London-based Welfare Association to commemorate the Nakba, and later developed to a broader viewpoint to documenting[10] Palestinian history, society, art and culture from the beginning of the 19th century.

> "It is not necessarily to start or stop at the Nakba, but nevertheless to look at Palestinians before that and after that … take that history and that memory as a means to reflect on what's happening today and as a way to think through ideas, concepts and propositions for the future." Jack Persekian, former director of the Palestinian Museum.

The Museum aims to be an innovative venue for creating and communicating research, knowledge and new thinking about showcasing Palestinian society, art, history and culture.[11] In May 2015 the museum officially joined the International Council of Museums.

In May 2016, it was announced that Mahmoud Hawari would succeed Jack Persekian as director, who was ousted by the board after three and a half years.[2][12]

Architecture

The Palestinian Museum is notable as a winner of the 2019 Aga Khan Award for Architecture. When it was shortlisted for the award earlier in the year,[13] the museum was noted for marrying an aesthetically pleasing design with environmental responsibility.[14]

Located atop a terraced hill, the museum building overlooks the Mediterranean.[15] With a design inspired by the surrounding rural landscape, the building integrates seamlessly into its environment.[16] The building's facade is made of local limestone[17] and its cascading gardens represent the history of Palestinian vegetation and agriculture.[18]

Builders laid terraces by hand, incorporating artisanal knowledge and skill.[19] Outdoor garden spaces extend interior spaces to facilitate outdoor exhibitions and blend the building with its environment.[20] The building's interior contains galleries, educational and research facilities, and administrative offices.[21]

The museum's sustainable construction earned it LEED Gold certification.[22] The building design and operations take sustainability into account.[23] To reach LEED standards, the builders needed to implement systems control technologies that were new to the area's building industry.[24]

The architects are Heneghan Peng, who designed the Grand Egyptian Museum. It aims to bring together a mix of exhibition spaces, research, and education programmes. Through its digital platforms and international partners, the Museum aims to connect with about 10 million Palestinians[5] scattered around the world, and with all those interested in Palestine.[25]

The museum building is built on nearly ten acres of land donated by Birzeit University near Ramallah, and the cost of the building is estimated at USD $24 to $30 million.[26][27]. Funds were contributed by "over 30 private Palestinian families and institutions", including the A. M. Qattan Foundation, the Bank of Palestine (privately owned), and the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development.[26]

The museum was inaugurated by Mahmoud Abbas on 18 May 2016, but it was "plagued by a series of cost overruns and delays", with some blaming Israel Custom authorities for those delays. [28]

See also

- List of museums in the Palestinian territories
- List of Palestinian artists

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External links

- Official website (http://www.palmuseum.org/language/english)
- The Palestinian Museum (https://twitter.com/palmuseum) on Twitter

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